

Town Hall #2 April 28, 2020

Additional Questions

Financial

Can youth be on an AYA and still be eligible for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)?

- We are working on getting more information on the CERB. The social worker will discuss with the young adult what their overall needs are and what programs best meet those needs. The AYA program is based on assessed need and young adults need to apply for the Federal Benefits that they are entitled too.

Will youth be eligible for an extension of AYA support beyond the current max of 48 months to account for program interruptions caused by COVID-19?

- We are currently reviewing the options available and will provide updates with any new information.

How will youth who don't have access to the internet, phone, computer, etc. be reached?

- This is something where we will need help to get the information out to youth and young adults through word of mouth, meetings like the Town Hall, stakeholders, service providers, and umbrella organizations like the Federation of BC Youth in Care Networks, First Call, AgedOut.com or to reach out to youth and young adults and get them connected to supports.
- We encourage anyone who has contact with youth/young adults in or from care to refer to our [Youth and Young Adults page](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/covid-19-information/youth-young-adults-response-to-covid-19) (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/covid-19-information/youth-young-adults-response-to-covid-19>) or AgedOut.com for additional information.
- If a young person in care is not able to connect with supports and resources, we would like them to connect with their social worker to discuss their technology needs.
- There are a limited number of cell phones that TELUS have provided for vulnerable youth for free during the pandemic. Please contact your social worker to see if you are eligible.

HOUSING

What will happen for youth who are scheduled to leave custody or treatment centres during the pandemic?

- For youth in custody centres, Youth Probation Officers work collaboratively with custody case management, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services (YFPS), and other members of youth care team to ensure there is a transition plan developed and updated regularly to address youths needs and community safety upon release from custody.
- Youth Probation Officers work collaboratively with, Social Workers, Youth Forensic Psychiatric Services, community agencies, and others to ensure each youth who are experiencing homelessness have a viable and up to date transition plan that addresses residence, overall safety and supervision.
- Plans for youth must include a stable residential option upon their return to their community. Youth shelters are not considered appropriate housing options.
- The youth health and safety as well as the safety of the community is taken into consideration in all planning.
- All precautions and protocols regarding public health directives related to COVID -19 pandemic are part of the plan.
- The conditions of any applicable court orders are also considered in development of plans.

Will housing supports be available to youth who have aged out since January 1?

- Youth and young adults from care will continue receiving the same level of service even if they were set to age out. That means caregivers will be supported to allow youth to stay in their foster home, contracted residential agency or with extended family under the Extended Family program past the age of 19 up to June 30. We are carefully monitoring and re-evaluating what next steps may need to be taken after June 30th.
- Youth supported under Independent Living Agreements or Youth Agreements and turning 19 will have their agreements extended, allowing them to continue to receive monthly support also up to June 30.
- Young adults who are enrolled in the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program and who have their school closed or program interrupted due to COVID-19, and who cannot find work can continue to receive financial support. We are working to find a way so that this interruption in your AYA does not count towards the 48 months available in the program.
- Young Adults that aged out between January 1 -March 31, 2020 are encouraged to call Provincial Centralized Screening at 1-800-663-9122 so that we can work with you to explore resources and supports.
- They can also provide links to supports available and credible/accurate information about COVID-19 and include the Provincial Health Officer's advice on how to stay healthy and prevent the spread of infections.
- There is work in progress at all levels. There is cross government work happening to support vulnerable youth in the community with each community developing vulnerable population plans.

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TELUS Mobility For Good (M4G)

- The M4G program offers young adults transitioning from care between the ages of 19 – 26 (inclusive) with free cell phones and no cost data plans for a two-year period. After the two years they are transitioned to a \$35/mo. plan indefinitely.
- To be eligible for the M4G program, a young adult must have been in **temporary or permanent care** of MCFD or a DAA as of their 19th birthday or meet the eligibility requirements for the Agreements with Young Adults (AYA) program.

For youth who want to leave their placement and get income assistance from the Ministry of Social Development, which youth can do that? Youth on an AYA? Independent Living or Youth Agreement? Who at MCFD will support them with that?

Young adults can apply for income assistance with the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) if they don't want to stay in their current placements. MCFD will work with SDPR to expedite their application and streamline approvals.

Who can apply for this? People on AYA, YA, IL?

- Anyone over the age of 19 can apply.

- If youth/young adults were transitioning off AYA, IL and YAG and/or they did not want to pursue the interim benefits from MCFD they could apply for Income Assistance.

Who at MCFD will support these young people to expedite their application with SDPR?

- A youth or young adult who is wanting to transition from their AYA, IL or YAG can work with their social worker to access income supports through SDPR.
- We will talk with our colleagues at Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR) to see if there is a way to expedite your applications and streamline approvals.

How will youth who don't want to stay in their current living situation be supported to find new housing when workers can't drive them to view places?

- This is a tough one with physical distancing requirement.
- There are several rental agencies that are doing their rental tours virtually.
- Youth and young adults should connect with their social worker to explore available housing options/opportunities.

Health and Safety

What efforts are being made to ensure youth who have recently left care are able to follow the recommendations to keep themselves and others healthy?

- We have communicated with young adults through their social workers, sending a letter to all young adults participating in the AYA program in each Service Delivery Area or Delegated Aboriginal Agency. Updates were also sent to youth/young adult-serving organizations.
- The letters acknowledge the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak and physical distancing measures which may be impacting their employment and participation in programs and causing concern about their support from the Ministry.
- We have created the MCFD Gov2 COVID-19 page to ensure that they have credible and accurate information about COVID-19 and include the Provincial Health Officer's advice on how to stay healthy and prevent the spread of infections.
- With these new emergency measures now in place, we will be following up to help youth access supports and get help fast.

What kinds of health and safety measures are being used in group homes or other residential facilities for youth in care?

- Within our youth custody centers, we have taken steps to ensure the health and well-being of youth and staff by not allowing the general public to enter the buildings.
- We know that connections with family and community stakeholders are crucial, so we have changed the format of in person visits to telephone and/or video to ensure that those connections continue to be made.
- We are using an approved screening process and following all recommended sanitation and cleaning procedures.
- We are working with our contracted residential service providers to ensure they are following the guidance, recommendations and daily updates on COVID-19 provided by Dr. Bonnie Henry, Provincial Health Officer.

If a youth calls their social worker or AYA for support because they're concerned that their placement isn't healthy or safe, what could that support look like?

- The circumstances of every youth/young adult is different so we encourage youth or young adults to contact their social worker or call provincial centralized screening at 1-800-663-9122 to discuss their individual situation and needs.
- They could be supported to work with their social worker to set up a meeting to discuss placement with their caregivers/care provider or connect with supports and services in the community or to support them to find safe housing.
- Planning will need to be done on a case by case basis to respond appropriately to the unique needs of each youth/young adult.

Mental Health

What virtual mental health supports are available to youth in custody? How will young people who don't have access to internet, computer, phone, etc. access mental health supports?

- Mental health supports continue to be provided on site in custody centres to support youth via spiritual care, cultural services and care, art therapy, addictions services.
- Youth forensics services are available in person for both assessment and intervention (where possible). In situations where youth forensic services are unable to be arranged in person fully due to Covid-19 impacts they are being provided via video and phone to ensure important service delivery is available and often clinicians will be in attendance in person to organize and operate the necessary technology while ensuring physical distancing.
- Regular case management is done with on-site probation officers.
- Virtual meetings for transition planning, release planning, making community cultural connections, and other community connections are done via telephone or virtually when not available in person.
- Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH) services are being adjusted to follow the recommendations of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. To serve clients safely in their homes, CYMH workers in the province that are providing services primarily virtually, or by phone so that they can maintain physical distancing.
- This time of physical distancing is a new reality for everyone and it is important now more than ever that you are staying connected. If you are needing technology supports, please contact your social worker or the local ministry offices or delegated aboriginal agency office. It is important that you have the resources that you need to stay connected and we have been working hard to ensure that we can help children, youth, family and care givers stay connected.
- For children, youth/young adults in care or aging out of care that need mental health supports and information they are encouraged to talk with their social workers. If they are lacking the resources, they need to connect with the virtual services that have been set up the social worker will make sure they have the technology they need to access those supports.
- There are also significant resources located on the MCFD website and on AgedOut.com

Communications and Technology

The last update on MCFD FAQ page is from March 31, 2020. Will this page be updated again?

- Yes, we can add links to the Q and A's youth and young adult information that stakeholders have been posting.
- We will also continue to update the Gov2 site as new information becomes available.

How will the most vulnerable youth who don't have access to internet, phone, computer, etc. be reached?

- Answered above

How are youth in residential settings able to connect virtually if the house they reside in doesn't have internet or a computer for the youth to use?

- If a youth is residing in a residential setting and does not have internet or a computer, we recommend that they contact their social worker to discuss their needs.

How are youth who are about to leave care or have left care that don't qualify for the Telus Mobility for Good program being supported?

- Youth leaving care who are eligible for the AYA program are eligible for the TELUS Mobility for Good program. Youth and young adults (up to 27th birthday) just need to be eligible they do not need to be currently on the AYA program.
- Youth and young adults are encouraged to have conversations with their social workers to discuss their specific technology needs to determine what provincial or federal benefits may be available to best support them.